

Book Reviews

INTRODUCTION TO CLINICAL MEDICINE. Edited by H.L. Greene, R.J. Glassock, and N.A. Kelley. Published by B.C. Decker Inc. Philadelphia, Hamilton, BP794.

This attractive book is exactly what its title describes; there is no mistake that it is aimed at medical students entering their clerkship year. Fully 20% of the content is an interestingly written and valuable description of important hospital function such as medical record keeping, writing orders and prescriptions, optimal use of the laboratory, reading the medical literature and laudably includes descriptions of the roles of allied health care professionals such as physiotherapists, pharmacists etc.

The medical information content is divided into systems, however, the approach is not disease oriented but chapters are written to delineate the approach to presenting complaints. Most clinical clerks will find this a useful approach giving them insight into the thought processes involved in diagnosis. The chapters are short and generally easy to read with a reasonably standardized approach taken by the many authors. Brief sections are also devoted to common gynecologic, psychiatric, ENT and oral presenting complaints which are often seen in the offices of generalists. The illustrations are clear and simple, but relatively sparse. The clinical photographs used, particularly in dermatology and rheumatology, are of good quality.

I was struck immediately by the large number of algorithms, which vary in complexity. The first chapter devoted to medical problems, for example is devoted to lipid disorders and runs to nine pages, of which four are largely devoted to algorithms and the further two are taken up by full length tables. Most physicians will agree that diagnosis in management in internal medicine are algorithmic processes, however, most of us have learned medicine by generating our own mental algorithms based on knowledge and experience, and I am uncertain as to the efficacy of algorithms as an effective learning mechanism.

While this book allows generation a differential diagnosis, it offers little in disease description, thus the reader is forced to another text to fill the gaps — in some instances this can be a daunting task. The diverse manifestations of multi-system diseases e.g. sarcoid, are also poorly served by this book and the diagnostic approach does not serve the investigation of multiple complaints well. Consistent with this approach there is no therapeutics in the text apart from an appendix on commonly used drugs that is difficult to use and poorly laid out.

Potential buyers of this book should therefore be aware that they will also need to invest in companion texts on disease pathology and therapeutics, however, this book will assist the trainee in developing relevant differential diagnosis and investigation plans, skills that medical students find most challenging and difficult to acquire. The book might have a place on medical teaching units or emergency rooms when in the space of five minutes reading, one can determine the important diagnostic considerations and the investigations required.

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MENINGIOMAS. 1990. Edited by Ossama Al-Mefty. Published by Raven Press, New York. 630 pages.

The multi-authored text entitled *Meningiomas* is a welcome addition to the literature on meningiomas, a tumor group which can still present the neurosurgeon a considerable technical challenge. The text is divided into 48 chapters in 8 sections.

A short historical section introduces the challenge of the surgery of meningiomas. This chapter is a condensation of the paper by Al-Rodhan and Laws.¹ The second section consists of the biology and pathology of meningiomas. Chapters on meningioma associated cerebral edema, recurrent and malignant meningiomas and a chapter on meningiomas outside the central nervous system are included. The section is very well done although some repetition does occur. The third section deals with special considerations such as meningiomas in childhood and in the elderly, multiple meningiomas and body reactions to meningiomas. And there is a chapter on meningiomas in animals. The section on the imaging of meningiomas consists of chapters on CT, MRI, angiography and PET scanning. Chapters on adjuvant non-surgical treatment [radiation therapy, radiosurgery and hormonal manipulation] and chapters on adjuncts to surgical treatment [embolization, anesthesia and intraoperative monitoring] make up sections 5 and 6, and complete the first half of the text.

The 7th and largest section consists of 19 chapters each devoted to an anatomical tumor site. The chapters include, to varying degrees, incidence data, clinical findings appropriate to the anatomic site, imaging diagnosis and surgical techniques and pitfalls involved in the tumor extirpation. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basal tumors which are now more commonly undergoing radical surgical removal. Some of these chapters are very similar to those on the same subject in the text *Neurosurgery Update I* edited by Wilkins and Rengachary.²

Section 8 summarizes spinal meningioma presentation, imaging and treatment.

The first half of this text is an excellent review of the subject of meningiomas; the second half is an excellent reference work on specific anatomical tumor sites. This text will be a valued addition to institutional libraries and will be of interest to neurosurgeons at all levels of experience.

1. Al-Rodhan NRF, Laws ER: Meningioma: Historical study of the tumor and its surgical management. *Neurosurgery* 26:832-847, 1990.
2. Wilkins RH and Rengachary SS (ed.): *Neurosurgery Update I: Diagnosis, Operative Technique, and Neuro-Oncology*. McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1990.

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NEUROLOGIA PEDIATRICA. 1988. Edited by N. Fejerman and E.F. Alvarez. Published by Librería et Ateneo Editorial, Buenos Aires and Barcelona. 804 pages. Price not available.

Nearly all textbooks of paediatric neurology in the Spanish language are translations of American, British or French works. This is the first multi-authored comprehensive text written primarily in Spanish by the editors and 47 additional contributing authors, all from Spain and Latin America. In this context it is unique and differs also from the single-author textbook of child neurology by Pascual-Castroviejo, published in 1983, because of the more diverse perspective inherent in multi-authored works.

The first chapter is a review of neurological physical diagnosis in children, disease categories and important laboratory investigations. It should provide a thorough introduction for paediatricians and residents in training. Chapter 2 by Campos Castello and Sfaello and colleagues is a particularly well written and systematic overview of this complex and all-encompassing topic, with enough details to be useful clinically in understanding pathogenesis and therapeutic approaches. Special consideration is afforded appropriately to the neurological complications of prematurity and also to neurosurgical conditions in the neonate. Other chapters address the topics of mental retardation, motor disturbances, paroxysmal disorders, learning disabilities, language and behavioral disorders, intracranial hypertension, meningoencephalitis, and a final chapter representing a pot-pourri of miscellaneous problems not easily categorized in other chapters. Neuromuscular disorders are included in the chapter on motor disturbances rather than being separated as an independent chapter as most modern English language textbooks would have done. The book contains very little information on neuro-embryology and congenital malformations of the nervous system, a deficiency perhaps reflecting my own personal orientation but nevertheless an important aspect of neonatal and paediatric neurology. Metabolic diseases also receive only scant attention. Neoplasms of the nervous system are included in the chapter on intracranial hypertension, though such a grouping might imply to trainees that increased intracranial pressure is a reliable and constant finding in all brain tumors, even if the text does not clarify this mistaken inference. I have the same objection to the inclusion of "coma" in this chapter on intracranial hypertension. The editors' attempt to organize the book by chapters denoting clinical presentation rather than traditional disease categories is thus only partially successful.

The text is sparingly but selectively and adequately illustrated, but because of the lower cost paper used in printing, some of the figures of imaging and of histopathology in particular have lost the sharp detail that is more early reproduced on expensive glossy pages.

For those amongst us who read Spanish, this book offers many refreshing perspectives that differ from our ingrained North American dogma, though the authors do not express ideas that diverge radically from interpretations of evidence generally accepted throughout the western world. I would recommend this book to paediatric neurologists who read even a little Spanish because it is much more than a restatement of English language textbooks of child neurology.

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TRANSIENT GLOBAL AMNESIA AND RELATED DISORDERS. 1990. Edited by Hans J. Markowitsch. Published by Hogrefe & Huber Publishers, Germany. 223 pages.

Few clinical presentations are as dramatic and bewildering as an episode of transient global amnesia (TGA). While the syndrome is well described, the etiology remains elusive, partly because of the transient nature of the symptoms and signs. This edited book attempts a comprehensive review, beginning with a historical introduction by the editor, followed by a clinical overview by Louis R. Caplan. There are chapters on TGA in relation to TIA, stroke, space occupying lesions, epilepsy, head trauma, migraine, and drugs. The book also includes chapters on atypical semiology of TGA, cerebral blood flow and pharmacological tests during TGA, positron emission tomographic studies, transient epileptic amnesia, neuropsychological testing during TGA and at follow-up, prognosis, transient psychogenic amnesic state and medicolegal aspects of TGA.

Like the memory disorder during TGA, the book is extensive but uneven. The chapters vary in style and quality. Although Markowitsch tends to write in slightly quaint English, his grasp of the historical and psychiatric literature of TGA is impressive. The chapter by Caplan on characteristic features of TGA is lucid and sets out criteria that while arbitrary, have the virtue of indicating the need or otherwise of investigation and prognosis. The chapter by Croisile and colleagues shows a remarkable degree of persistence and luck in documenting pharmacological testing and cerebral blood flow during TGA. S.D. Parwatikar has authored a fascinating chapter on the medicolegal aspects of TGA. He discusses transient memory loss as a legal defense, and in regard to the capacity to consent, the capacity to stand trial, competency to serve a sentence and several other issues, including sexual intercourse and TGA, enlivened by an example of a divorce case in which adultery was alleged.

The editor suggests that the incidence of TGA is rising in industrialized countries and the blurb on the back cover suggests that TGA is largely unknown to the medical community. If true, then this book is too extensive and inconsistent to educate physicians who are not neurologists. Even neurologists may find the book more useful as a reference than as a text.

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EPILEPSY: CURRENT APPROACHES TO DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT. 1990. Edited by Dennis B. Smith. Published by Raven Press. 276 pages. \$94 Cdn. approx.

This is one of several books to appear in the last decade devoted to the topic of epilepsy. As pointed out in the preface recent publications have run the gamut from very general to highly specialized. The editor states that this book is directed primarily at the primary care physician. This might be true for a family physician with a very special interest in epilepsy but I feel that the audience most likely to benefit will be residents in neurology, neurosurgery and psychiatry, as well as clinical neu-